



UCLUELET FIRST NATION 24-Unit Revisionary Housing Project— Building on What Is

Ucluelet First Nation (UFN) spans nine reserves on the west coast of B.C.'s Vancouver Island; its main village of Ittatsoo has a registered population of about 620, but provides residence for approximately 200; the other 420 are either waiting for on-reserve housing, or living off-reserve, where monthly rents begin at \$850 for a one-bedroom house. When UFN decided to create a new housing development in 2006, the community had to consider not only its limited funds, but also its long-term needs.

The DNR Management development team ensured that community consultation was integral to the development from the beginning, by involving the UFN Housing Committee, community members and the Chief and Council, and updating designs as the community's needs emerged. The location was hardly the usual housing situation: the area is prone to strong winds and rain, and at risk of both earthquakes and tidal waves; sloped terrain subjects some units to flooding. Furthermore, the housing shortage has led to overcrowding and associated mold and air-quality problems.

The emerging design involved 24 new social housing units: two triplexes, three duplexes, six single-family homes and a six unit co-housing building that could accommodate a traditional extended family, with a common area for group meals and gatherings. What was not so traditional about the design was the LOGIX Insulated Concrete Form (ICF) construction, which uses stacked, interlocking forms made of expanded polystyrene foam and filled with steel-reinforced concrete to create the external walls. This design is both energy-efficient and durable, with an expected life-span of a century. Coated on the inside with acrylic stucco, the walls resist mold, while an external cement-based siding (Hardi-Plank) resists the area's high winds and rain, assisted by the buildings' large overhangs.

Airtight design, radiant floor heating and heat recovery ventilators (HRVs) optimize the energy efficiency of the new homes. Other kinds of efficiency lay in the construction itself: because the walls were erected first, and were impervious to moisture from the beginning, there was no need to wait for good weather to pour the concrete floors. And by re-using wood and other material from the cleared site, the DNR Management team and UFN were able to save money, train and employ local people, and reduce construction waste.

Six of these units were funded by the regular housing allotment from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC); a one-time grant from CMHC, along with a contribution from UFN and from INAC, funded the remaining 18 units. Completed in March 2008, the new subdivision with 18 new housing units promises long-term affordability for Aboriginal families in comfortable homes that are easy to maintain. There are benefits to the rest of the community as well: the wood recovered from construction will go to improve other buildings, and community members who received ICF-construction training will be able to apply their skills to future developments in a high-demand labour market.

Key facts

- Target group: on-reserve Aboriginal people
- 24 new social housing units with an efficient and environmentally sustainable design
- Cost to build: \$157 per square foot
- Cost to rent: \$350–\$825 per month

Contributors

- Ucluelet First Nation: funding and recycling of found resources and wood products
- Nuchalnuth Tribal Council: training
- DeltaLok: price reduction on retaining wall
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada: Housing Allotment
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation: a Housing Internship Initiative for First Nations & Inuit Youth (HIIFNIY) grant; and funding through the On-Reserve Non-Profit Housing Program

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